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Jason Bartlett
Youth Services Director

**Testimony of the City of New Haven
Before the Appropriations Committee**

Regarding
Department of Labor Funding

Submitted by
**Jason Bartlett, Youth Services Director and
Tomi Veale, Youth@Work Coordinator**
February 11, 2014

Senator Bye, Rep. Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee,

The City of New Haven is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the Department of Labor Budget in support of the continued funding of the Connecticut Youth Employment Program.

The Connecticut Youth Employment Program funds youth employment throughout the State including funding for the Youth@Work Program in New Haven which is a partnership between the Workforce Alliance, the City of New Haven, Board of Education and private employers.

As part of the City's Youth Violence Prevention Program in New Haven the Youth@Work initiative provides the important first employment opportunity for many of our cities' youth. The Centers for Disease Control cites community poverty as one of the risk factors associated with youth violence¹. It has been shown that increased risk factors associated with serious, violent and chronic juvenile delinquency are strongly correlated with decreased socio-economic status; it therefore follows that providing youth with opportunities for economic success will help to mitigate these risk factors.

Through a partnership with New Haven Family Alliance Street Outreach Worker Program (SOWP) we are able to work with high-risk, disengaged youth who have been placed with summer employment opportunities through the Project Success Program; the SOWP Program reports that of 50 participants in the Project Success program,

- 48 youth were engaged in the work-to-learn life skills training,
- (29) Youth completed the training;
- (28) youth assigned a work-learn site for a period of 10 weeks,
- (12) Youth participants remain actively employed in full-time and part-time employment for 3 months or more.

"Having a summer job is a self-worth, five week life saver for the young people I work with in Project Success. These young people live at or below the poverty level and have had some kind of

¹ *Understanding Youth Violence Fact Sheet*, Centers for Disease Control, 2010,
<http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/YV-FactSheet-a.pdf>

run in with the law, but for the time they are working, crime is down and parents aren't getting calls that their child has been locked up, nor do they have to come view their child's body. Little children are able to enjoy the outdoors in their own neighborhoods, families are able to have safe cook-outs in their own yards; plus youth can have finances to help get the things they need like clothes, school supplies, etc. I wish the summer Youth @ Works could be at least seven weeks, so the youth will be working the majority of the summer, leaving just enough summer time to enjoy and be ready for the school year."

**Rodney T. Moore, Coordinator
Project Success Program**

In a report published by Connecticut Voices for Children, unemployment has been cited as being consistently higher for the youth 16 and over and the recession has increased the difficulty for our youngest workers just entering the labor force to find work. The City's Youth@Work program is designed to ease barriers to employment by connecting low income at risk youth with important first time job opportunities helping to build work skills, learn financial literacy and stay busy for the summer months.

Our partnering worksites have stated how the collaboration with Youth@Work has helped support their programming. For example, Nasirs Youth Group is a program that operates in the inner city of New Haven; they operate all year providing a before and after school program with homework help as well as a summer program during the months of July and August.

"The need for stable, innovating programming and jobs are essential in our community in order to provide the youths with the necessary tools needed in order to succeed in life, by providing them the opportunity to have on the job training and job readiness skills." –**Mia Dubose Franklin**

For the summer of 2013 the \$382,900.00 state contribution leveraged an additional \$108,890.46 in City and private funding to employ 728 youth and young adult supervisors (ages 14-21). While 728 youth were employed, the state, city and private funding allowed us to employ 428 youth.

Continued funding is essential to provide at risk youth with the critical first employment opportunity to prepare them for the workforce. New Haven has experienced high unemployment rates, especially among our youth and we know that job employment is directly tied to violent behaviors.

We are collaborating with the Board of Education, police, non-profit providers such as New Haven Family Alliance and others to use our youth employment slots to drive positive behavior amongst out youth.

We are hopeful that the state will increase youth employment funding opportunities, especially for the big cities; including New Haven and allow us to continue this import work